



**GMES
AND AFRICA**

**GMES & Africa Communications
Working Group
Inaugural Meeting**



REPORT

23-24 July 2018,
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

1. Introduction

Participants representing the African Union Commission (AUC), various consortia and Regional Economic Communities (RECs) agreed at two workshops held in Kenya and Tunisia in April and May 2018 respectively, that communications experts and focal points of both the GMES & Africa Programme Management Unit and consortia should establish a GMES & Africa Communications Working Group and convene a workshop before the November 2018 GMES & Africa Forum. Through various consortia representatives, the GMES & Africa Programme Management Unit created a database of nominees for the Communications Working Group and convened the

inaugural meeting and Workshop at the African Union Commission Headquarters in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, from 23 to 24 July 2018.

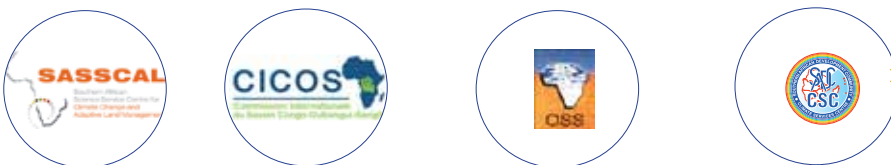
The aim of the workshop was to catalyze the participation of Communications experts and focal points of GMES & Africa and its Consortia as well as harmonize their contributions. Among its objectives was to strategize on working methods for the most effective ways of communicating about GMES & Africa, and to devise concrete mechanisms for seamless communication between and among communications experts and focal points of Consortia and GMES & Africa

2. Participation

The following consortia were represented by participants at the inaugural meeting and workshop:



SASSCAL, CICOS, OSS and SADC-CSC were not represented at the meeting.



3. Agenda

Items on the agenda included an opening and inaugural session, presentations and discussions on GMES & Africa and its Communications and Engagement Strategy, presentations and discussions on the regional communications experience of various consortia, development of a

common work plan for the Working Group, brainstorming on visibility and coverage for the 1st GMES & Africa Forum, and the development of a media plan for the Forum.

4. Opening and inaugural Session



Dr. Mahama Ouedraogo, Director of Human Resources, Science and Technology Department, AUC

The official inauguration of the Working Group and the opening of the ensuing workshop were presided over by the Director of the Department of Human Resources, Science and Technology of the African Union Commission, Dr. Mahama Ouedraogo, who described the meeting as timely, as GMES & Africa enters its active implementation phase. Therefore, he noted that the mobilization of the expertise and professional output of communications functionaries of consortia is critical to harnessing available tools for publicity, information sharing and public engagement to enable and drive GMES and Africa com-

munications and outreach. He said the African Union Commission relies on Communicators to raise public awareness on the critical role of Earth Observation in sustainable development; and to provide information to policymakers, scientists, businesses and the public on a real time basis, whilst promoting intra-African collaboration and steering regional and national advocacy.



5. Presentation and discussion on GMES & Africa



Mr. Adiatou Fatty, Communications Expert, Human Resources, Science and Technology Department, AUC

Following presentations on GMES & Africa and its Communications and Engagement Strategy by the Senior Scientific and Communications Officers respectively, participants expressed appreciation for the initiative by the AUC to mobilize communications functionaries so as to discuss and formulate common working standards and methods. The ensuing discussions generated ideas and recommendations on a number of pertinent points.

5.1. Recommendations

- **Active information sharing between AUC and consortia:** The AUC to continuously feed consortia with comprehensive information about GMES & Africa for onward sharing with audiences and stakeholders.
- **Access to policy makers by consortia communications teams:** The AUC to use its strategic institutional influence and channels to support consortia in reaching out to policy makers at the regional and national levels, who are often difficult to access.
- **Continually involving the RECs in GMES & Africa:** The AUC to continue exploiting the presence of the RECs in its governance structures, to harness regional opportunities for the optimization of GMES & Africa's implementation.
- **Sustainable budgeting for GMES & Africa Communications:** The AUC to actively monitor the implementation of the 10 percentage budgetary allocations for communications by all consortia, to enable the effective and sustainable implementation of communications activities that are often cost-intensive.
- **Capacity building for consortia communications teams:** The AUC to support in building the capacities of communications teams within consortia through training, especially because some consortia don't have communications experts and given the different levels of expertise among members of the working group.
- **Increasing the international visibility of GMES & Africa:** Over the remaining period of GMES & Africa's implementation, the AUC and consortia need to increase and leverage their participation in relevant international events, which is one way to amplify the programme's visibility to the level of the predecessor projects.
- **Integration of consortia contributions to GMES & Africa's Communications Strategy:** The AUC will accommodate contributions of consortia to the GMES & Africa Communications Strategy, when it produces a revised edition, to accommodate ongoing revisions to the AUC branding policy.
- **Involving Communicators in all relevant GMES & Africa events:** To maximize communicators' uptake of technical and thematic issues bordering on the programme, and to deploy the full power communications to the advantage of GMES & Africa, the AUC and consortia should ensure the participation of their communications teams in all relevant events.
- **Interpretation/translation during GMES & Africa events:** The AUC and all consortia should try to cater for interpretation/translation services during all major meetings and events so as to enable participants' fullest understanding of the discussions and deliberations.
- **Envisioning the future post-GMES & Africa:** GMES & Africa should start considering mechanisms on how communities can take over at the end of the programme.

6. Presentations and discussions on the regional communications experience of consortia

Presentations by all ten participants featured the regional experience of their consortia in communications, particularly their outreach programmes, communication tools and approaches, as well as marketing techniques. This was followed by a spirited discussion which culminated in the following recommendations:

6.1. Recommendations

- **Catalyzing lessons learnt from the experience of consortia:** consortia need to properly revisit their regional communications experience and reflect on what has worked, what has not worked for them, and why.
 - **Differentiating between communications strategies and communications plans:** Members of the GMES & Africa communications team should draw the line between communications strategies, which are generic guides on positioning communications to achieve the programme's objectives; and communications plans, which are indicative practical plans on how to communicate about specific events and programmes.
 - **How to tow the line between I.T, Telecoms and applied communications:** Participants need to mark the functional difference between these three and utilize the advantages in such a unique blend of expertise found within the GMES & Africa Communications Working Group.
 - **Harnessing the role of partner institutions by consortia communications teams:** Communications teams within consortia must utilize expertise within their partner institutions and involve them in their communications activities.
 - **Harmonizing communications at the regional and national levels:** consortia communications teams must endeavor to harmonize communications at the regional and national levels by fostering communicative messages, standardizing their messaging and synchronizing their activities through interactive networking.
- **The need for innovation on the part of GMES & Africa communicators:** It is important consortia communications experts to be innovative by learning about the technical tools and products of their programmes, before adapting and interpreting the knowledge for the lay man.
 - **The provision of timely information to audiences and stakeholders:** Consortia communications teams need to be proactive in providing timely information to communities especially on natural disasters.
 - **Understanding GMES & Africa audiences and segregating their needs:** Consortia communicators need to know their audiences, distill them, identify their needs, and develop dedicated products appropriate for each of them.
 - **Branding as an effective tool for communications:** The AUC branding policy will serve as a generic guide which consortia must utilize to evoke the strength of branding.
 - **Attracting media coverage:** Communicators must seek to maximize the presence of GMES & Africa in local and international media by way of:
 1. establishing relationships with journalists and media operatives
 2. inviting and giving roles to policy makers and celebrities in their events
 3. associating with major community, national and regional events and taking advantage of the visibility
 4. creating media networks and joining existing media networks
 5. packaging information in a way that makes it irresistible to the media
 6. creating and investing in marketing incentives and products that entice media outlets



7. Development of the GMES & Africa Communications Work Plan

Participants brainstormed on the modalities of positioning communications as a catalyst for the utmost realization of the objectives of GMES & Africa. They developed a joint matrix which will serve as an integrated work plan, featuring the following key indicators:

- Communications activities
- Activity levels
- Channels
- Deliverables
- Timelines for execution
- Indicators for success
- Officials responsible
- Milestone



8. Presentation, discussion and recommendations on the 1st GMES & Africa Forum

The GMES & Africa Communications Officer introduced the 1st GMES & Africa Forum to participants, describing it as a milestone and a key communications platform in the calendar of GMES & Africa. The Forum will be co-organised by the African Union Commission and the Government of Gabon through the Agence Gabonaise d'Études et d'Observation Spatiale (AGEOS). It is scheduled to take place from 19 to 23 November 2018, in Libreville, Gabon. The AUC therefore deemed it necessary to engage consortia communications teams in taking advantage of the Forum to heighten visibility for GMES & Africa.

Participants noted the importance of the 1st Forum as a landmark in the implementation of GMES & Africa. They however expressed concerns over the timing of the event, when two COP events are taking place in November and December of 2018 respectively with a similar level of targeted participants. They also observed that differing the Forum to early 2019 would give participants the

opportunity to implement for at least 6 months and have concrete results to report on during the convergence.

The GMES & Africa team on the AUC side responded that differing the Forum to anytime in 2019 will violate the agreement with the European Commission, which provides for 3 Forums during the full implementation cycle of the programme. Given the remaining 2 year period of implementation after 2018, this creates the unfeasible scenario of organizing 2 Forums in one year. The AUC team further posited that consortia would need no minimum grace period before the Forum since reporting on results of implementation is not a critical objective of the Forum.

The workshop agreed on using a media plan template to be developed and filled by the AUC, and shared with participants for their inputs. This will identify strategic activities that will enhance visibility and media coverage for the 1st GMES & Africa Forum.



Dr. Mahaman Bachir Saley, Senior Scientific Officer, Human Resources, Science and Technology Department, AUC

Conclusion

In the two-day deliberations, participants discussed means and mechanisms of boosting communications as a key pillar of GMES & Africa and with a view to leveraging information-sharing, awareness-raising, outreach and visibility as conduits for creating impact. They shared experience and ideas on best practice of driving communications and achieving tangible results. The discussions and brainstorming culminated into recommendations on how to strategically turn around and deploy existing and new techniques to consolidate strengths and overcome challenges in communicating about Earth Observation.

Participants pledged their commitment to cementing the

foundations and actualizing the objectives of the GMES & Africa Communications Working Group. Among other things, they called for seamless information flows between AUC and consortia, capacity building for consortia communications teams, sustainable funding of communications activities, and the active involvement of communications experts in all relevant GMES & Africa activities. The workshop would lead to a joint communications work plan, as well as regular meetings of the Working Group to operationalize the joint work plan and discuss other matters bordering on GMES & Africa communications.





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